

A
TREATISE
Against
Irreligion.

By *H. C. de Luzancy*, Priest of
the Church of *England*, and
M. of Arts of Christs Church
in *Oxford*.

L O N D O N:

Printed for *E. W.* and are to
be sold by *Hen. Bonwicke*, at
the Red Lion in *St. Pauls*
Church-yard; 1678.

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Imprimatur,

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1677.





To the Right Reverend Father
in God, John Lord Bishop
of Oxford, Dean of Christ=
Church. &c.

My Lord,

A *Treatise against Irreligion,*
cannot be better directed
then to your Lordship; whose life
is one of the best proofs we have
for Religion; whence we may not
only conclude the truth of Christia-
nity, but also that its severest rules
are easy and practicable. Irreligious
men may elude the clearest demon-
strations, and laugh them to scorn;
but they cannot but wonder at, and
yeild up themselves to those great
examples which appear in your
Lordships conduct. They strike at
their hearts with an irresistible
force, and do not only convince
them of, but also perswade them
to a better belief.

M^o

The Epistle Dedicatory.

My Lord, your Lordship's both publick and private, Episcopall and Domestick vertues, make Irreligion asham'd of its own principles, and do abundantly evince, that the Church of England, in these latter ages, wherein vices seem to have over-run the whole world, has still the means and vertues of the primitive time.

Your Lordship refus'd the highest dignities in the Church, with as much earnestness as others court and follow them. Episcopacy, which usually lays open those defects, a private life had before happily conceal'd, did reveal in you all the qualities the Apostles and the ancient Canons require in a Bishop: you have taken upon you all the burden, and left all the Splendor of so great a charge; and your Lordship rather suffers then enjoys the honours that are inseparable from it.

You give the Clergy of your Diocess, the example of a penitent and laborious life, of a constant self denial

The Epistle Dedicatory.

denial of an indefatigable charitiy, of an even and unblamable conversation, of unspeakable love to the ancient spirit of the Church, and of an uninterrupted residency and care of their Flocks; they verifys in your Lordship, that famous saying of one of the greatest Bishops that ever was. Verus Amor recti habet in se Apostolorum Consilia, & Apostolicas Sanctiōnes.

My Lord, I had the happiness to be for two years together witness of your Lordships holy life; when I was under your government in Christs Church, that magnificent Colledg. Which the grandeur of its buildings, and amplitude of its revenues commend less then the gravity of its Canons, and the number, learning, vertue, and civility of its Students. The University of Oxford, who know no equal out of this Kingdom, and is now, and has been for many hundred years together a seminary of great men both in Church and State;
owes

The Epistle Dedicatory.

owes to your Lordship the greatest part of her splendor, you improve her buildings, increase her revenues; enlarge her libraries; encourage all arts and science to flock to her as to their center, keep up the strictness of her discipline, and the reverence due to her degrees.

I receiv'd there so many favours of your Lordship's, both in publick and private for the comfort of my soul, and the improvement of my studies, that I should be guilty of a most notorious ingratitude; if I did not let the World know how good and generous your Lordship has been to me. This is the end, my Lord of this Dedication; and I will think my weak endeavours abundantly rewarded, if I can perswade the World that you have engag'd me to be as long as I live,

IO FE 60

My Lord,

Your Lordships

most humble and

most obedient Servant;

H. C. de Luzancy.

Advertisement.

THE Reader must expect here no demonstrations for Christian Religion. This Treatise which is rather an essay than a book, supposes it not as demonstrated, but only as probable as Irreligion seems to be to Irreligious Men. And that this may not seem to be said at a venture, it is prov'd first, that Irreligion cannot be demonstrated; But has only in the minds of its votaries a great degree of probability: so that Irreligion and Religion, are equally probable. And 2ly, that supposing Christianity as probable, it is the greatest madness in the World not to embrace it.

This is the design of this Treatise, of which it may be said, that the form is new, or at least seems to be manag'd after such a manner, as to leave no room to the slanderers of Christianity, or prejudices to its adversaries.

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A
TREATISE
Against
Irreligion:

The First Discourse.

CHAP. I.

The easiest way to bring an Irreligious man to believe, is to suppose his doubts.

THere are a sort of men
so affected concerning
Christian Religion, as
neither to reject it as totally
false, nor embrace it as un-
doubtedly

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doubtedly true ; but they hang between both, mov'd by the different impressions that Faith on the one side, and the Reasons of Irreligion on the other, work in their minds. They owe to that confus'd mixture of opinions, that they are neither wholly Religious nor Irreligious. They perform the outward offices of Religion, doubting still of what it proposes to believe, to hope, and to fear ; and leaving to their fate to decide what shall become of them after their death, they only mind now an easie and contented life.

Some have gone further ; and doubting has so far prevail'd upon them, as to choke and

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extinguish in them the very least spark of Faith. Either they own no other Divinity but Nature, as the *Atheists*, or admitting of a God, they deny Christ, as the *Deists*, and holding the World to be eternal, and the Soul mortal, cut off the consequences attending the immortality of the Soul, viz. the last Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.

How different soever these two sorts of men appear to us, yet it may be said that their Errors flow from the same source, viz. an uncertainty and instability of mind, which exacts reasons for every thing, and being satisfi'd with none, sticks close to the possession of its

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freedom. All the difference between them is, that the one carry their doubts so far as to become rashly confident, and mistake that for falshood which is not demonstrated, as they are pleas'd to fancy it ; whereas the others still doubting, still irresolute, bring themselves to a neutrality not a whit better than an open and profess'd impiety.

It is very often needless to make use of solid reasons to cure them whom their prejudices arm and fence against all reasons. They reject Scripture, laugh at Tradition, suspect whatsoever is beyond the reach of a natural understanding, tho it be never so little ; and spoiling

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ing Faith of all the Authority it has over us, admit of no other principles but Reason, Experience, and the Testimony of their Senses.

And so the strongest Arguments that Religion claims, to remove or oppose Errours, being drawn from Scripture and Tradition, rejecting either of them, they think themselves invincible, because they shift till they cannot be spoken or fought withal.

It may be so far condescended with them, as to make use of neither ; nay, as to lay aside all the proofs History, Philosophy and Nature affords, and only stick to their doubts and uncertainties.

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I say doubts and uncertainties ; for if they have no demonstration for Christian Religion, they have none against it. The most learned in the mysteries of Irreligion, have not yet demonstrated the Eternity of the World, the Mortality of the Soul , the Impossibility of a Judgment, and of an eternally happy or unhappy Life. All that they have done is to elude and evade the Arguments brought to assert them ; all which summ'd up, amounts at most to a probable doubt, but can never reach to a full and real perswasion.

But the nature of doubt being to be equal on both sides, they must give us leave to doubt

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doubt of the Dogmes of Irreligion, as of things that may be false. Nor can they complain we require too much of them, when we desire them to assent, That it may be there is God; it may be our Soul is immortal; it may be the World had a beginning, and must have an end; it may be there is a Life to come. The Authority of so many Nations that ador'd God for five thousand years, and Christ near two thousand, is enough to counterballance their reasons, and make the question at least dubious and uncertain; and is so far from doing them any wrong, that their condition cannot be more advantageous than to suppose their doubts, and look upon them as principles

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ciples that must end the difference.

CHAP II.

That in things that are doubtful, 'tis an infallible Rule of Prudence, To close with that Party where there is nothing to lose, and much to gain. Application of that Rule to Christianity.

SELF-interest is the part man is most tender of: all external considerations may move, but that only can perswade and determine him to any thing; and since the time sin brought him to take himself for his ultimate end, he loves nothing but him-

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himself, or if he loves any thing besides, 'tis still for himself, and the advantages he hopes from it. The greater they are, and the nearer they come to him, the more he is affected with them. Thus, tho friends, riches, and all other external advantages sway extreamly with him; yet their influence comes short of that which his liberty, health, life, reputation, and generally all those, wherein his happiness is concern'd, have upon him. So that if such advantage is set before his eyes, as not only concerns him for a while, or for a part of himself, but embraces whatsoever his body and soul can compass through the space of his eternity, there is no doubt

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doubt he will earnestly run to it. If in things of less importance, as are his friends, his liberty, or his life, he seems so concern'd; what must not be expected from him, when he is sensible, that from what is propos'd to him depends his eternal happiness or misery?

Upon that principle which no man can deny that has not divested nature, it is easie to raise another.

In the choice of Opinions, the truth and falshood whereof cannot be certainly known, that Party is to be preferr'd, wherein you venture nothing if it be false, and win much if it be true; and that rejected wherein nothing is to be got,
if

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if it be true, and the loss irreparable, if it should prove false.

There is no wise man but assents to this maxim. Thus men order their undertakings, and not trusting the event of things, or their own measures which often miscarry, they work upon that which is more certain to them. Thus, of two Remedies that are to be try'd, that is never apply'd which must kill the Patient if it does not cure him, but rather that which if it restores him not to his first strength, will at least prove harmless. Thus there is no Merchant but would engage in a Commerce, which if successful, there is much to be got, if not, nothing to be lost; and
he

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he that should leave such a bargain for another, which if attended with all imaginable prosperity, there is nothing to be got, and if not, there is an inconceivable loss to be suffer'd, would be lookt upon as bewitcht and besool'd.

Now let Christianity and Irreligion be try'd by this Rule, since both are a sort of Commerce, which every body is to measure by the risque he runs, or the reward he hopes.

Laying aside all the particular reasons that evince the truth and excellency of Christianity, let this suffice, that it is certain that following it, if it proves true, there is eternal happiness to be expected, and nothing is
ven-

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ventur'd if it proves false. Whereas the contrary is to be said of Irreligion.

The first part of this Assertion is so notorious, and so palpable, that it seems needless to prove it. So that there remains but the second to be made out, that supposing Christianity proves false, we venture nothing at all.

Chap.

CHAP. III.

That supposing Christianity proves false, we venture nothing at all.

ALL the loss Christianity exposes us to, is that of the inordinate pleasures and sensuallities of this life, which he that has been made a Disciple of Christ at his Baptism, has promis'd to renounce. The Irreligious man can find no other risque but this ; and all he can say is, that a Christian is oblig'd by his condition to deny himself, and forsake the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

But to unvail and cure this mistake, let us compare as exactly

actly as we can the Irreligious man and the Christian, both in their deaths, and in their lives, and it will easily be seen who of them ventures most.

There is no other time wherein they may be compar'd; for after their death, both in the opinion of the Irreligious, are annihilated: and besides that two annihilated beings cannot be compar'd, the non-being putting them in the same rank, it were impossible to judge of the difference of their lives by a state which makes them equal after their death.

If then we look upon an Irreligious man, and a Christian, when they are a-dying, we shall find them both so even concern-

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cerning pleasures or riches, and generally all that has past, that the one cannot claim the least advantage over the other. I suppose that each of them liv'd a whole Age, with that difference, that the first enjoy'd without any interruption, and to the highest degree, all the pleasures a long and happy life can afford; and the second was depriv'd of all the delights the Law he observes prohibit to its Votaries. Nay, which is more, I suppose that he barr'd himself even from those that are permitted, and studied nothing all his life, but to hate and mortifie himself. Yet after all, it must be said, that how vast a difference soever be seen between

tween them whilst they live; they are perfectly even when they dye. The pleasures of the Irreligious; and the sufferings of the Christian are equally gone. The voluptuous life of the first does not make him more happy; nor to have liv'd in torments a hundred years renders the second more miserable; the happiness or misery of the Soul consisting in what sheresents now, and not in what sheresented before.

If remembrance contributes any thing to our present happiness or misery, the Irreligious are certainly most miserable. Death is his misery, and the happiness of the Christian. It ends the pleasures of the first and the

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sufferings of the second. It is the comfort of them that pine away their lives in torment, and the despair of them that live jollily. The remembrance of an happy state makes us to be in a most grievous punishment, and the absence of those delights we us'd our selves to, so galls us that it were better never to enjoy, or never to forsake them.

What then upon this supposition can a Christian lose that the Irreligious does not? It cannot be said he has lost all the pleasures his Religion forbid him to enjoy, since 'tis evident this loss is common to both, in that state we consider them. Or, to speak more properly, the
Irreli-

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Irreligious is the only loser, since the other cannot lose those pretended advantages he never possesseth.

However death ravishes from the first all the vain felicity of his life. The Annihilation which he is ready to fall into, deprives him of the least sentiment of it; he is not nearer to happiness than the Christian: since both being suppos'd to be annihilated, they lose equally all the consequences of being, as pleasures, happiness and misery.

This is the greatest evil that can attend a Christian supposing that his Religion should prove false, to lose as much as the Irreligious does. But the

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Irreligious stands not upon so good terms; for what course soever things may take, if his opinion misleads him not, he wins nothing; and if he comes to be deceiv'd his loss must needs be infinite. It is evident that he gets nothing for the future, since he expects to be annihilated, which destroying his soul is the ruine of the hopes he could have entertain'd.

But if he chances to mistake in the Ideas of things, he has fram'd to himself; if he finds when his body is dead that his soul cannot dye; but falls into the hands of the living God; if there is after this life an eternal happiness of which
he

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he is for ever depriv'd, and a place of unspeakable torments to which he is condemn'd, who can apprehend the greatness of the loss he sustains, and express his madness, to engage in a party the lamentable end whereof is so evident.

And that which sets off better the disadvantage of Irreligion, is that the greatest happiness an Irreligious man can hope for in this belief, is to come to that point a Christian looks upon as his greatest infelicity. What is it that a Christian fears most, but that after this life, there should be no reward of his sufferings, no God, no Spirits, no Heaven, nor himself? And yet this is the grand

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reward impiety can expect; it is brought so low as to receive as a reward what a Christian looks on as a punishment; he must wish for nothing after his death but a general Annihilation, and the mouth of the deep shut up upon him; for if he chances when he goes out of the World to find either God or himself, 'tis impossible to imagine a more miserable Creature.

Chap.

CHAP. IV.

The Irreligious Man, and the Christian compar'd in their lives.

Here lies the strength of the Irreligious, and it seems hard to convince him that he risques more then a Christian. A Christian who sticks religiously to his Law, must deny and offer himself a continual violence, he must set a Watch upon all his senses to hinder them from betraying his heart; he must forgive his Enemies, oppose his own desires, and confine his passions to the severe limits of a Divine Law

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Whereas the Irreligious lets his heart, his senses, his passions run their full career, he checks none of his desires; and enjoys a felicity free from remorse for the present, and not disturb'd by the terrors of the time to come.

And when we inforce this Maxim of prudence *that in a doubtful case the surest way must always be our choice*; he opposes that other to it, *that the certain is always to be prefer'd to the uncertain*; and the pleasures of this life being certain, and the recompence of the next uncertain, it is a folly not to cleave to present things out of fear of imaginary, or at least of uncertain punishment.

This

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This is the Stumbling-block of the Irreligious, and the most specious pretence of impiety, which may be so remov'd as to shew it shocks the very principles of natural reason.

1st. The supposition is alter'd, and Christianity and Irreligion being both suppos'd as doubtful opinions, neither of which can be demonstrated, how can they go under the notions of certainty or uncertainty?

2^{ly}. Assurance being the natural effect of that which is certain, as hope of that which is uncertain, it must be said in their own opinion that we have a full and entire assurance of the goods of this life, since they are real and certain, and only
hope

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hope for those of the other, since they are expected and uncertain. And so the question is this, whether it be always wisely done to prefer those goods that we are sure we cannot miss, to those we have only a probable ground to hope, how vast a difference soever may be found between them. The falshood of this supposition is obvious, and might be a sufficient answer. But because it is not altogether exact; that the question may be stated in its natural terms, let us see what is wanting to to the certainty of the goods of this world, and what must be defalk'd from the uncertainty of those of the next,
First,

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First, The longest life in its full extent seldom reaches above 80 years, nor consequently the pleasures that attend it. Since he loses them, and ceases to be happy, who ceases to live.

2ly, All our life is not capable of that happiness. Old-age and Infancy must be excluded; nature must be endow'd with a vigor Old-age has lost, and Infancy has not yet attain'd: and so in comparing the goods of this life, to those of the next, we must only reckon the time between these two ages. Staying upon these terms, the question is this; whether a Wise man ought to prefer forty or fifty years of constant pleasures to an eternity of hap-

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happiness, which tho uncertain yet wants no rational grounds to be expected.

3^{ly}, Health and Riches are absolutely necessary to enjoy that happiness which results from the possession of the creatures. Nay this necessity is so absolute that when separated, they cannot make the Irreligious happy. Take from him his health, and he will be a walking disease; he will languish and consume himself away. Restore him his health, and rob him of his riches, he will be a Beggar brought to the greatest want. What taste can the delights of this life have for poor and sickly people? They that need, are destitute of
means

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means of coming to, they that abound, and are sick, of strength and desire to enjoy them.

But Riches and Health, things so essential to his carnal felicity, are extreemly uncertain. No man can be secure of their possession. That vast number of languishing people met withal every-where; Wounds, falls, Bankrupts, Sterilities, Shipwracks, Fires, Thefts, and a thousand like misfortunes betray their inconstancy, and teach us that nothing is so ruinous and uncertain as happiness built upon them.

4^{ly}, Supposing that a vigorous health, and a perfect plenty of all things should conspire to make you happy, how can
you

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you be secure of your happiness, if your life it self is not secure?

What is in the World more subject to alteration then our life? It depends upon the violence of men, or all the accidents of Fortune. We may dye in all ages, at every time, in every place; we cannot promise our selves one single year, or one day, nay which is worse, one single hour. So many sudden deaths set before our eyes are proofs against all exception, and what happens to some, threatens and is an argument of fear, for all. Our life is lent us by moments, and there is but that which is present we are really Masters of. We cannot be
sure

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sure of any goods but of those only which this single moment affords; all the others are only grounded upon a probable hope. And to this is reduc'd that certainty so much boasted of, of the pleasures of the present life, to which this Maxim is strangely misapply'd, *that we must leave the uncertain for the certain*, and so the question is this; Whether any man of sense can resolve to give over the hopes of eternal happiness for a transitory one which is so often ruin'd by poverty and diseases, and is secure of nothing but the moment of its enjoyment.

Chap.

CHAP. V.

Limitation to be put to the uncertainty of the promises of Christian Religion.

IT is to be weigh'd on the other side that the uncertainty of everlasting happiness a Christian proposes to himself is not of so large an extent as one may imagine. For tho we condescend so far as to suppose that it cannot be made certain by any internal principles; yet it has all the external certainty a rational man can desire.

1st, The universal consent of Mankind in all times and places. The most Barbarous agree

gree with the politest Nation, the Turk, and the Scythian, with the Roman and the Greek; and there is no irreligious person, but this proposition must stagger, that it is impossible to produce since the origination of mankind, any Nations or Society of men that ever made profession of Irreligion; Irreligious having been lookt upon in all ages as monsters, not only for the enormity of their Doctrine, but also for the smallness and strangeness of their number.

2ly. For what relates particularly to Christianity, who can deny that it compasses the Irreligious with a cloud of witnesses? The blood of so many

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thousand Martyrs of all Ages, Sexes, Conditions, from the lowest to the highest rank is an astonishing argument. And though some other Societies may challenge their Sufferers, yet the pains of our Martyrs are dignified by such circumstances as are to be found nowhere else but under the Gospel.

And thus the Uncertainty of an eternal happiness and misery must not be lookt on as those things we usually call uncertain, and admit of equal probability for their not-being, as for their being, but as a thing, which though not evident in it self, yet has a strong eternal certainty.

Then

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Then the question proposed is resolved to this, Whether any rational man must prefer a single moment of pleasure he enjoys, to the hopes of an everlasting happiness, which though not evident in it self, yet is expected by all mankind, and so strongly believed by Christians that they have lost for it, their quiet, their Estates, their Thrones, their Lives.

Nor must the Irreligious say, That Christian Religion is false, or impossible. For then he argues against himself; and is out of power of Claiming for himself that the certain is to be preferred to the uncertain. If it be false or impossible, it is no more uncertain.

CHAP. VI.

Resolution of the question, Whether the certainty of the goods of this Life can overpower the uncertainty of those of the next. No Condition of men will assent to the choice of the Irreligious.

ALL those necessary limitations being put on both sides, it is easie to state the question in its natural terms. It runs thus, Whether a wise man ought to prefer advantages very short in their greatest extent, interrupted by Diseases, Disturb'd by thousand unavoidable accidents, uncertain in their Duration, certain only for an instant ;

instant; whether he ought to prefer them to the hope of an Eternal happiness, which so many millions of men have dyed for; and expose himself to an eternal misery which has the same probability? Whereas, without losing that blessed hope, and risking so Dreadful a danger, he may enjoy in an innocent life, a part of those Delights he haunts after in a sinful course.

The single proposal of this question is enough to have it resolved. Is there upon earth any man so bewitcht, and so out of his wits, as to doubt one single moment what must be his choice? Is it not a stupidity equal to that of Beasts them-

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selves, to prefer pleasures attended with so many defects, to the rational hopes of eternal happiness, because these are present, and that is yet to come?

But alas! Who shall make that impertinent choice? Men being different amongst themselves in age, condition, birth; the older they are, the proner they will be to catch at future happiness; being so near their end that there remains for them but very little of the present. The ordinary sort of people whose estate lies in their arms will think as old men. To them may be added all that live a laborious life, that is, almost all mankind.

I ask

I ask then an Irreligious person, what man is mad enough to side with him in his choice? If he is a Child, who knows yet nothing of another life, and very little of this, he must not be proud of it. A Child knows but what he has tried, and he has tried but few things. He cannot therefore compare those objects which affect his senses with those his understanding apprehends not. And his judgment, though never so pertinent, will be still that of a Child. If he is an old man in whom nature begins to decay, what would induce him to so strange a choice? Does he think he ventures too much, when he parts with those plea-

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sure he is not capable of, for a state eternally happy, which though uncertain, yet is very probable? And would it not look as an incredible madness in him, that is dead to all the pleasures of this life, should he not renounce them, and choose those of the next? If he is needy, and sickly how can he determine himself to it? I leave it to any mans consideration, whether he that far from swimming in wantonness has scarce time to live, had rather give over the hopes of eternal happiness than to deprive himself of those sinful joyes, he never did, and never shall possess? And for them that lie under sickness, let any wise man judge

judge, whether he that has lost the strength both of his body and mind, and entertains no other commerce with men, but that which tends to his recovery, is to prefer that little he has left him, to the probable hopes of an endless felicity.

But why is the question confined to three, or four sorts of men? Let that choice be offered to all Trades-men, Plowmen, Merchants, Souldiers, Seamen, &c. Sure there is none so stupid as to prefer the hardships of their lives, to that eternity of happiness Christian Religion induces us to hope.

Irreligion therefore cannot be the Religion of those men. It can admit none for its Votaries

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ries but young, rich, robust people, abundantly provided with all the ease, plenty and pleasure this life can afford. No other condition is fit for it. Nay, they must be secure of persevering in the shining flourishing state they are: For should any revolution spoil them of their Estates, any sickness enfeeble their bodies, or if they live to old age, their very choice which they look'd upon before as rational, will appear to them foolish and extravagant.

Nay, they will not stay so long. Half a day is more than sufficient to pull down the magnificent engine of their opinions. That which was true in
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the morning, whilst they had their health, will be false, deceitful, erroneous, ridicule in the evening if they are wounded or dangerously sick. And though they seem then unwilling to alter their mind, either out of obstinacy or shame: yet they cannot persevere in it without proclaiming themselves fools. There remaining to them only some moments of life deprived of all pleasure, and attended with torments, 'twere ridicule beyond what can be imagined to prefer them, how present and certain soever, to the hopes of eternity, how doubtful and distant soever it appears.

If

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If then Religion is to be preferred to Irreligion when poverty, sickness, or old age fall upon us ; Is Irreligion, to be preferred to Religion, when Youth, Ease, Plenty and Health leave nothing to our desires to lust after ? Is not truth the same in our young as in our old dayes ? Is there a Religion for the Rich, and another for the Poor ? Certainly the truth of those things, and much more that of God, depends not upon the alterations of our lives. It is still the same notwithstanding the different dispositions or opinions we are in.

Nor can Irreligion shelter it self in that vast number of Christians, who by falling into sin
pre-

fer no less than they, the enjoyment of transitory things to the promises of the Gospel. Though it may be confest with grief, that all that has been said against the irreligious, may in some sense be applied to them, yet there is an infinite difference between them. When Christians fix their heart on transitory things, they do it not in consequence of their belief. They acknowledge that they act contrary to their Principles. They accuse and condemn themselves. If they sin therefore 'tis not out of any Irreligious principle, which persuades them to prefer the present to the future, and what they enjoy to what they hope. In
their

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their very sins they believe still the words of Christ, and trust his Promises. But the corruption of their Nature over-
sways in them the Dictates of their Faith. An incomprehensible weakness the first sin left on them, renders them more eager after present things, though nothing comparable to the absent. They are carried away through a violent passion which conceals the horror of sin from the eyes of their souls, or trusts too much upon God's mercy.

What can hence the Irreligious conclude? unless it were this, that humane nature is depraved, and men act against their own principles, which

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which shall be easily granted.

But considering this maxim in it self, and independently from the dispositions of particular men; does any thing evince more palpably that it is false, than the ordinary course of the world?

There is no man but leaves a thousand times in his life the certain for the uncertain. A merchant ventures his money which is certain against a very uncertain gain. A Conqueror ventures that peace he enjoys at home, against a very doubtful success. A Plowman, a Souldier, a Pilot venture what they have against probable hopes of getting more. Nay upon this Maxim, *Of leaving the*
certain

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certain for the uncertain, turns
all the commerce of mankind,
since they disturb their quiet,
which is the thing they are
most secure of, to come to
what they pretend, which is
full of uncertainty.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

*The true Notion of this Maxim of
St. Austin, Tene certum,
Dimitte incertum.*

FROM all that has been said,
it is easie to conclude the
falshood of that maxim, that
the certain is to be preferred to
the uncertain. Now to judge
how far it may be true, we need
consider but this : that when
we are irresolute, 'tis alwaies
either upon the ends we pro-
pose our selves, or the means
to attain them. From whence
these three Propositions fall na-
turally.

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1st. When we are agreed upon the end, and only doubt which means are surest to attain it, 'tis the greatest madness in the world to leave the certain for the uncertain; to part from a way which leads infallibly to Heaven, and engage in another which perhaps may end in Hell. And this Principle proclaims the madness of the new Doctrine of Probability, that Monster brought up by the Jesuits for the total extinction of the small remains of Christianity in the world. For since all Christians agree upon the end they aspire to, and which is more upon the means Christ has given in the Gospel, what is there

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there more void of sense than to leave them, for by-ways, *unknown, and untrodden paths.*

2ly. When the end is not agreed upon, and that our mind is at a loss, upon which to fasten it self, it is to be examined whether those ends are equally advantageous to us; as whether the gain exceeds considerably the venture: and then the certain is infallibly to be preferred to the uncertain. *I were indeed an inconceivable madness to venture an advantage quietly posselt, against another of equal worth, but uncertain. All the reward of your labour, if you succeed, is to be in the same state that you were in before; and if you miss, to lose

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both what you possess and what you hope.

This is the case of the Duellists, who venture their lives that they may get a name. They lose their life which is the greatest of natural goods, to win an imaginary glory; which becomes after their death a real infamy to all subsequent ages.

3^{ly}. If the end we pretend to are odds, and the good we hope considerably greater than that we possess already, the first though uncertain, is to be preferred to the other. Because all things impartially weighed, the greatness of the good you hope, is a greater advantage than the certainty of the
the

the small good you possess. You hope indeed with uncertainty, but that uncertainty is the foundation of your hope, and sufficiently rewarded by the greatness of what you expect.

'Tis upon that account that Merchants venture a little for a considerable gain though very doubtful. A Souldier and a Seaman expose their lives to the end that they may pass the rest of their daies more comfortably, though they cannot be secure of the length of their life, nor of a gain which a thousand perils upon Sea and Land seem to obstruct. They sacrifice the present time to that which is to come: things that are certain to those that

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are doubtful, and look upon that comfortable living they promise themselves one day as a greater happiness than the quiet possession of their life, with all the troubles and pains that attend it.

Should the happiness of the next life exceed this only of some Ages, or Degrees, there were ground enough to a wise-man to prefer the first to the second. Nor is there any man of sense, but would resign up an age of ordinary happiness, and such as the world conceives it, upon hopes of a reign of a thousand years, and a life infinitely happy.

But is there no proportion between these two sorts of Goods;

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Goods ; if that maxim be false that the certain is to be preferred to the uncertain when the advantages are not equal : how much more when the one is finite , and the other infinite ; the uncertain you expect infinitely more durable and perfect, than the certain you venture.

And this is the just idea we must form our selves of this and of the next life. What proportion is there between the pleasures of this world and the happiness of Heaven ? What comparison between joyes so limited in their Nature , in their Duration , in their Extent , and those unspeakable ones, the eye has never seen

E 4 because

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because they are not Colours,
nor the Ear heard
August. Ep. because they are not
118. Sounds, nor have
entred into the heart of man,
because it is too narrow for
them? What equality can there
be found between the possessi-
on of the whole earth it self,
and that of all the riches of
God? Between the dark, hea-
vy, passible state of our bodys,
and the blessed state of immor-
tality, and spirituality, wherein
the resurrection of Christ shall
instate them? Certainly the
Distance is greater than that of
Atom to the Universe.

And must the Irreligious be
afraid of venturing that finite
good, that Atom, that No-
thing

thing against an infinite Being ? Must he not be ashamed of claiming here the right of preferring things that are certain, to them that are not ? he who in the way, a hunting, on his travels, at play and in his commerce disclaims it so openly ? He ventures in all these things, with this difference, that there is still some proportion in his risque, and gain both of them being finite, whereas there is none between this life and eternity.

CHAP. VIII.

Conclusion of this Discourse.

L Et the Impious then extend so far as he pleases the greatness of his sinful joyes. Let him live to the age of *Mathusalem* without the least cloud or mixture of infelicity, yet he cannot deny that this long contexture of years and happiness is still finite. He must needs confess that an uncertain good is to be preferred to any other when it is infinite. The uncertainty of it not debarring us from our hopes, and the last degree of hope of an infinite happiness far surpassing the enjoy

joyment of a transitory one. All the venture is to lose those transitory Goods, which loss being already inevitable, cannot be parallel'd with an happiness incapable of diminution.

I see no answer to this, except that eternal happiness and misery are Ideas subsisting nowhere but in the fancies of Christians, which is the more irrational, because as long as they cannot convince their Religion of falshood and impossibility, but still doubts, and still reasons, all the foregoing ratiocination remains in its entire force against him.

This only may be added, that this is the conformity between a Christian and an Irreligious

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gious man, that the first believes, and acts contrary to his belief, and the second doubts, and acts contrary to his doubts. Of the one it is too too manifest. The other talks as if he were certain, and thinks, and droops, without ever being able to fix himself. When he speaks of Religion he is confident that it is altogether false, and impossible; and when he reasons, he finds himself exposed to a bottomless Sea of doubts and uncertainties.

The

T H E

Second Discourse.

The removal of some Objections against Christian Religion.

IT is not intended here to prove the truth of Christian Religion, this having been already done by great men, with a success answerable to their expectation; but only to remove some of the most substantial Objections of the Irreligious, whereby Christian Religion is evinced to be at least most probable. They may

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may be reduc'd to these three
heads. *The seeming lowness of*
the mysteries Christian Religion ob-
liges us to believe. The incompre-
hensibility of our Doctrine. The
impossibility of those Miracles we
look upon as the foundation of our
Faith.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

*The Lowness and Despicableness of
our Mysteries answered.*

THIS reproach is not peculiar to the Irreligious. The *Jews* before them had lookt upon the death of Christ as a stumbling block, and the Heathens as a foolishness. *Marcion* and *Valentinus*, as *Tertullian* relates it, did teach that Christ had assumed an imaginary body, and his Birth and Death were only illusions put upon the eyes of the Spectators. *Apelles* would have him covered with a real flesh, but borrowed from the Stars, and not from
the

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the Blessed Virgin. Thus man would have ordered the grand mysterie of Incarnation, had he been Master of it. He would have left the bare disposition to God; as if he could or should do nothing else but what man is able to think.

The occasion of those Dreams of the Hereticks, was that they believed Christ's humiliations unworthy of him, and the ground of the Irreligious men is that they believe they are unworthy of themselves. Both are as different in their consequences as in their principles. The first concluded that he had no real body, nor had really suffered. The second from the birth and death
of

of Christ inferred that he was no God. The aim of both is to separate sufferings from God, as things altogether irreconcilable. The Irreligious destroy the Divinity of Christ, and receive his humiliations; The Hereticks deny his humiliations to preserve his Divinity. Christians unite them both in the person of Christ; acknowledging that though God, as his Father; yet he is become lower than the Angels, taking upon him our nature; and lower than men, suffering for them a most cruel and shameful death.

Supposing then as a Principle that Christ is God, it is no hard task to prove that his hu-

F humili-

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miliations are so far from taking away the belief of his Divinity, that they enforce and support it. Let them be proposed to any man of sense, and he will conclude :

1st. That his humiliations can bring no alteration to his Divinity ; God being wholly immutable and incapable of decay, to what state soever he is pleased to descend.

*Tertul. de
carn. Christ.*

*Periculum status sui
Deo nullum est.*

2^{ly}. That if he took upon him the vile and despicable form of a man, 'twas because he would have it so. He could have come invested with all the majesty expected from the Son of God. His resurrection, his ascension,

ascension, his sitting at the right hand of his Father, are mysteries as full of Glory, as the others are of shame. He is instated by them in that splendid appearance the Irreligious and Jews would have him in at the beginning. So that his humiliations cannot be attributed to any want of power.

Nor dares the Irreligious deny these glorious Mysteries; unless he resolves to yield up those he looks upon as so shameful. Knowing nothing of either of those but from the relation of the Evangelists, he must equally receive, or reject the whole matter of fact.

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3ly. That he did it because he would do it, and that he would do it because he loved us. *He loved man in his miseries and infirmities; and* *Tertullian. ib.* *who can turn into a crime so stupendous, so miraculous a charity?*

4ly. That nothing is really low or shameful but what bears the character of sin. The Greatness of God shines in the number, order and motion of the Heavens. Nor does he fall from his Majesty, when he applies his power to the formation of the vilest insects. His providence maintains them; His immensity renders him present in the horriddest places. Nor did yet any man think all these

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these things a shame and a reproach to him. Yet almighty God is as really in them after his manner, as Christ in his mysteries of Humiliation:

That nothing is to be believed but what is seen is not
disclosed in the way of
irreligion, whose objects be-
lieve many things they never
saw. Who of them denies
examples, though they never
were there? Who of them re-
futes the testimony of Scrip-
ture by profane History?
and because they never saw the
like? Who of them disbelieves
many things he has been told,
be-

F 3 CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Christian Religion obliges us to believe impossibilities, and things beyond the reach of nature: Answer.

THat nothing is to be believed but what is seen is ridiculous in the very doctrine of Irreligion, whose abettors believe many things they never saw. Who of them denies *Antipodes*, though they never were there? Who of them refuses the testimony of facts related by prophane Historians, because they never saw the like? Who of them disbelieves many things he has been told, be-

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because some of them proved false, and makes his private opinion the rule of what is credible, and possible ?

But it is demonstrable the Irreligious can deny none of those miracles which are obvious in the Scripture. There are but two wayes of disproving miracles. First, shewing their impossibility. Secondly, Their want of Authority. It is altogether out of their power to prove the first.

A miracle is either impossible as being beyond the force of nature. If he thinks them impossible in that sense, so far we agree. Or it is impossible to God, and this he cannot assert according to his own prin-

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ciples. Or impossible in it self, and this cannot be made out, but by demonstrating a real, certain, evident contradiction in them.

And if we consider things in themselves, what impossibility is there, that a soul, and body, which were united a little before should join again, and be in the same state they were before their separation, if there is a power capable of uniting them? What contradiction is there that a blind man should receive his sight; a dumb man his speech; a Paralytick his limbs? Nature doing it often with time and remedies, why cannot a superiour power do it in a moment?

For

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For the second, *viz.* Want of authority, no Irreligious fure will charge them with. Besides the integrity of them that transmitted them to us ; Besides their principle that no lye was lawful, but that a lye in matter of Religion was detestable ; they say nothing but what they have been eye-witnesses of. Some of those miracles have been believed for three thousand years ; and preserved by a people that has built their Religion upon them. The rest have been believed sixteen hundred years since, and contributed to the conversion of all the nations of the Earth. Their Preachers sealed them with their blood ; wrought the same,
if

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if not greater, and induced by them an infinite number of people of all Ages and Conditions to dye for the truth of the Gospel.

'Tis matter of fact that before Christian Religion was brought into the world, all Nations, the Jews excepted, were Idolaters. It is another matter of fact, that those Idolaters changed Religion, and from Infidels became Christians. And what greater proof than this can be required for the authority of miracles? how could such a sudden alteration be seen in the world without an infinite number of wonders which backt and supported the Gospel? Were so many millions of men meer children

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children, whose mind was altered at first sight? Were they so stupid and simple as to receive any new Doctrine, without discernment and upon trust? Is not the History full of the strange excesses Nations ran to, to defend those errors the Disciples of Christ would remove from them? Could they be overcome after so long, so stout a resistance by any other force than that of miracles? Do not the violent and lasting persecutions of the Primitive Church, evince that they were of a Religion contrary to ours? How could twelve Fishermen agree upon so strange a resolution, as that of delivering iyes to all the world, and be obstinate

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stinate as no torments could persuade them to desist from their foolish undertaking? How could so many Nations assent to lies, which procured nothing to their defenders but death and sufferings? How could they venture their lives to maintain and transmit them to us by a constant and uninterrupted tradition? Certainly one should convince us first, that all those Nations were naturally mad, and apt to prefer a severe law which extends its empire to the very desires of the heart, and has for its Promulgators men unknown and persecuted every where, to their first Religion which put no limits to their cupidity. And before any body should

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should embrace Irreligion, the Irreligious is concerned to prove by solid arguments that those changes are naturally possible; and the more because they are so particular to Christianity as to be found no-where else.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The incomprehensibility of things Christian Religion obliges us to believe, answered. The injustice and absurdity of that reproach.

THe Irreligious complains many points are proposed to his belief which it is impossible for him to understand; as if nothing was to be believed but what falls under his senses. Which reproach may be reduced to these two Propositions: *That nothing is to be believed, but what may be comprehended, and that things are not when they are incomprehensible.* Then which two propositions nothing can be

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be imagined more impertinent.

Besides that thereby a weak, frail, blind man makes his private understanding the rule of all things; is it not palpable that we cannot comprehend those very things which are most obvious? And thus must we believe nothing that we see, hear, touch, smell and taste, since we cannot comprehend any of those things; he being only said to comprehend *that can know the secret causes of those effects which affect our senses; make out the internal principles which compose all bodies, and tell us what are the differences that distinguish beings amongst themselves; which no man living can do, not only in*
remote,

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remote, but even in the most ordinary things.

Nay the incomprehensibility of our mysteries is so far from taking away any part of their credibility, that it renders them more credible. The most natural consequence that can be drawn from the existence of God, is that he is incomprehensible. Were he not so, the conclusion is evident, *therefore he is not.* Supposing then that there is a God, he must be infinite and omnipotent. But were he comprehensible, his infinity and omnipotence were meer contradictions. It is the essential character of his Nature, that neither his essence, nor great works can be known.

know. Should I doubt of these two qualities Religion teaches me he has, the nearest way to have it cleared up, would be to examine the effects attributed to him. If they did not surpass my understanding I should suspect, and deny them. But were they incomprehensible to any humane apprehension, it would be an infallible sign of their certainty.

I look then upon the works faith ascribes to God. I read that he has made the world with nothing; that he has imprinted in the Skies, and Stars, a motion, that would be eternal, were it not stopt by the same hand as formed it: that he has united without mixture

G

or

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or confusion Divine nature to the Humane in the person of Christ: that this ~~David~~ raised himself from the dead, and will raise also all men: Those miracles surpassing infinitely the reach of my understanding, I conclude they become him who is omnipotent and infinite.

There is no answer can be given to this, except one should prove that incomprehensibility is not the consequence of an infinite being, which is notoriously absurd. What is then the shift the Irreligious recourse to? He stares at the word *incomprehensible* and concludes there is no God. That is, he makes use of the propriety of a being.

• a being to destroy the being it self; he denies him by that which proves most convincingly that he is. He is incomprehensible, therefore he is not. This is the height of absurdity. I should as well conclude that man is not rational, because he reasons, and found out Arts and Sciences.

But incomprehensibility being relative to our humane apprehension, whose bounds are too narrow to apprehend God, who does not see, that to reject the belief of his being, and mysteries upon his being incomprehensible, is to make ignorance and darkness a shield against Religion. An absurdity equal to that of him who

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would not believe the Sun
shines at noon, because his eyes
are too weak to look upon
him stedfastly.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Irreligious in his principles cannot avoid to believe incomprehensible things.

IT is now an easie thing to see how unjustly the Irreligious refuses to believe supernatural things, who is forc't to admit of natural that are no less evident, and incomprehensible to him. And thus when he endeavors to answer the greatest evidence according to his own principles, or elude miracles the fact whereof he cannot deny, he falls into such absurdities, as exact from him as hard a be-

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lieve as the faith of Christians.

He cannot but see that the world, and all the beings it includes, keep still the same order. The vicissitude of daies and seasons, the constant succession of generations whereby the world is preserved, and renewed, is still the same. The very first thoughts that such a spectacle gives him is to know what has been, or will be its duration; That is, whether it had a beginning or shall have an end.

A Christian fastning his knowledge upon Scripture, believes that God created the world, and shall destroy it in that time only known to him. And when he has askt, how such a thing would be done,
he

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he acknowledges it is inconceivable, *tota ratio fa-*

cti est potentia faci-
entis.

*August. Ep.
ad Jan.*

The Irreligious of the other side not being able to apprehend how God could have framed so many vast bodies with nothing, had rather believe that the world ever was, and will ever be as it is. And so to avoid the creation which he cannot conceive, he believes rather the eternity of the world which supposes it never was created.

Now let any body compare these two beliefs. Is the eternity of the world easier to comprehend than its creation? Is it harder to believe that God

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by his infinite power created all beings, than that they did alwaies subsist without either author or dependency? Is there light and conviction enough in the opinion of the eternity of the world, to venture upon its eternal torments which the denial of the creation engages us to? All the favour an Irreligious man can expect, is that they are both incomprehensible. If we cannot know how one single grain of Sand has been made of nothing; much less can we conceive a chain of Years, Ages and Generations, which being limited of one side, is so infinite of the other, that the first link is not to be found.

Reason

Reason therefore being blind on both sides, authority alone can incline our minds to one, or to the other. But in this also Christian Religion claims all the advantage.

The Doctrine of the creation of the world has been transmitted to us by *Moses*, that is, by the ancientest of all Writers, as living not long after those Patriarchs whose names came down to us. That tradition was preserved amongst the Jews; then amongst the Christians down to us, and will last to the end of the world. It was received by the Heathens themselves. Most of the Platonists understood their Master in that sense, and they who did not,
but

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but only believe that matter was eternal, did confess that the world in its being and preservation depended from an eternal and independent cause. They admitted of the ancient Chaos wherein all the Elements had been mixt and confused; the separation whereof they attributed to the same agent who ordered them as we see.

Some Philosophers knowing nothing of it, brought up the eternity of the world, and that upon very weak conjectures. The Disciples of *Aristotle* embrac'd it rather, than confess it had been created. And inundations, fires, plagues, transportations of Nations, and above all the *Αποθνήσκουσιν* of Kings and
and

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and the deep ignorance that attended Idolatry defaced the very remains of that tradition. It was the constant opinion of some Nations that the world was eternal.

Hence fair play was given to their pride that disputed antiquity. They imagined that to be the ancientest, which gave them right to look upon the rest as younger Brothers. The *Egyptians* and the *Ethiopians* claimed that honour, and declared that they came immediately from the womb of the earth. And the *Athenians* took the proud title of *Ἀυτοχθόνες*.

But the *Chaldeans* and *Egyptians* carried their Dispute to the very height. The first, as refer

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fer *Diodorus*, and *Tully*, who laugh at both, said that when *Alexander* the Great over-run *Asia*, they had already applied themselves to the study of the Stars just four hundred seventy thousand years. And not reckoning their years by the reign of their Kings, but divers periods, some of six thousand, others of six hundred, the least of sixty years they made up their account. The *Egyptians* wanted no number to outvie them. They found in their *Archives*, that since they had the name of *Egyptians*, the Stars had already compleated four times their great revolution, that is, returned to the same state where they

they were when they began to move : which includes an incredible number of years. Being as proud of Astrology as the *Caldeans*, they boasted to have kept the *Ephemerides* of an infinite number of years, and the lives of their Kings all that time. An Author of theirs relates three branches of them. One of Gods, the other of Heroes, the third of men, who reigned an infinite number of ages. Nay they were so thirsty of antiquity as to say that *Vulcan* their first King reigned innumerable ages. But the *Annals* of his reign were lost. The Sun succeeded to him as being his Son, and reigned six hundred thousand, six hundred

dred - seventy four years.

May it not be askt whether the brain of them that made such reckoning, or of them that believed them was well settled? and yet this is the ground of the belief of the Irreligious. Those Dreams are all the shelter they can find, if they go to prove the authority of the world by way of authority.

They agree therefore with Christians in that they believe incomprehensible things. But with this difference, that we believe only upon the authority of God who has revealed them. We are perswaded that his power goes farther than our apprehension. And that he includes

• cludes within, and works without himself greater wonders than we are able to conceive. And as it is alwaies rational to trust him who is infinitely wise, so reason it self forces us to believe things beyond reason.

This impotency of conceiving the works of God is the only thing can make us happy. What sort of God is this that can be included in the narrow minds of men? Certainly an object of this nature is a slender ground of felicity. And our hopes being inseparable from our faith, his incomprehensibility is the greatest comfort of our souls.

This Irreligious will admit of nothing but what his senses

ses or his experience make plain to him. When therefore they believe any thing they neither see nor apprehend; their belief is not grounded upon the certainty or evidence, but the interest they have in things. It is not the object that determines and fixes their belief, but their heart and inclinations. They believe that such a thing is after such a manner, because they know it, and are satisfied, but because they would have it so. Nay, they carry so far that abuse of their reason, that when they cannot avoid to believe things morally incredible, they had rather believe them incredible by their gross absurdity, than any divine grandure that lies in them. These

• These are the miserable shifts of the Irreligious. But if they could stay there, and feed themselves with the imaginations of their hearts without any danger, we had nothing to say to them. All wise men would only think them out of their wits; and so far 'tis well 'tis no worse. But to believe imperinencies and Chimera's with that danger, that if they mistake, they shall fall into an eternal state of misery; 'tis a fury, a passion, an extravagancy that wants a name, and can scarce be imagined.

CHAP. V.

*Abuse the Irreligious makes against
the Immortality of the soul of
the conformity between man and
beast.*

IT is not intended here to
prove the immortality of
the soul ; but only to shew
how false and inconsistent are
the principles of Irreligion.
There is a vast conformity be-
tween man and beast, in their
senses, in the multiplication of
their kinds, their self-preserva-
tion, their passions, their di-
stempers, their death, &c.
From the mortality of the souls
of beasts the Irreligious con-
cludes

cludes that of the soul of man, and thinks in that to judge according to the natural impressi- on that form in his mind so many qualities, which being common to both make a sort of *prejuge* against man.

To evince how false is that ratiocination, it may suffice to prove that it is no less against, than for him. He concludes from that conformity, that as these of beasts, so our souls die. Why not that theirs are immortal as well as ours? The conformity being equal to both sides, it must not be more partial to one than to the other. According to all appearances, saies the Irreligious, Man, Beast, are altogether alike, in the neces-

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sity of dying, and in all the consequences of death. But the whole beast dies body and soul, therefore the whole man dies so also.

But the very self same argument may be thus as probably inverted. Beasts and man are alike in their death: But man dies in his body and not in his soul; therefore Beasts do so too, and their souls are immortal. Either of these conclusions must be equal to the Irreligious: since professing to believe but what he knowes; he knowes, and can know the mortality of the souls of Beasts no better than their immortality.

But

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But Christians, saies he, acknowledge the whole Beast dies. Which answer is the more absurd because he must not argue from what we believe, but only from what falls under his senses and experience, and what he must thence rationally conclude. But he sees only in a Beast the death of the body. His eyes can go no further, and concludes from that internal equality any thing for their soul. Or leaving the answer in its full latitude; 'tis in vain he makes use of our authority concerning the destruction of the souls of beasts, since we do it by reasons which establish the immortality of ours.

But supposing with them and all the world besides the mortality of the souls of Beasts; all that can be concluded from their conformity with man, can only fall upon that wherein they are alike.

There is in man that which is rational, and that which is animal. Man is born, preserves himself by nourishment, and his kind by generation. He is subject to the distempers of his body, the passions of his heart, the disorders of the Elements, and the necessity of dying. All this is common to him, and the smallest Beasts. Nay many of them out-do him in the perfection of his senses. Their light is more piercing,
their

their hearing quicker, their smelling more refined: But all this is still animal. All those resemblances exaggerated with the greatest care, extend not to the rational, which is his grand difference. And so all that can be inferred hence is, that he dies in all that is beastly in him: in his body; in his sensitive life; in all the faculties and operations that depend from corporeal Organs. But what is all this to the destruction of his soul, which depends upon those Organs, neither in his being, nor his operations.

Who can hear without indignation this manner of arguing? Man is like beast in that which

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is common to both ; Therefore in all that is peculiar to him. Beasts die in their bodies, in that sensitive life which constitute the beast, so does man ; therefore he dies in that rational intellectual life which is proper to him. Man dies in his body, therefore in his soul. The Sun shines not when it is Ecclipsed ; therefore he shines not at all.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Conformity between Man and Beast.

THe conformity between man and beast is threefold ; the first natural and necessary, the second shameful, the third laborious.

The first is the consequence of an animal life. Man and beast agree in eating, drinking, sleeping, &c. And although this state be imperfect, as supposing many wants, yet there is neither shame nor pain for man. He does in that nothing against his reason, which is one part of his nature, and it is agreeable to the body which

which is the other. This conformity is inseparable from man in this world. Nor is the state of innocence it self free from it.

The second is the consequence and punishment of sin. It consists in the reign of our passions over us ; the disorders of body and senses which rebell against the law of the mind, and in all the share lust claims in the propagation of nature. This state is natural to beasts, and shameful to man, because he is a stranger to it. 'Tis a shame for him, that passions should command, when reason must give laws : that he should not master his own senses : that he should covet what
is

is not his own; and love what he is convinced he should not; nay sometimes that which he would not love.

Man is naturally no less stranger to the third, than to the second: So many labours incident to his life, so many sufferings and distempers that end but with him, cannot naturally fall upon an innocent creature. He must have been guilty to be afflicted.

Nor can the Irreligious instance the sufferings of beasts, who are innocent after their manner. Why must man the most excellent creature upon earth, who was to command beasts, be twice more miserable than they, First in the multi-

multitude and diversity of his pains, which come from the infinite number of his wants. Secondly, The quicker and more galling sentiments of his pains. Beasts are afflicted with no evil but the present. Man fears besides, and foresees the future. He who is condemned to die, dies a thousand times before his execution. He feels infamy which outvies any grief. And by the help of memory is galled at the privation of a state, the happiness whereof he knowes most exactly, and desires most earnestly.

Beasts are incapable of any of those pains, and nothing but a cause stranger to mans nature, such as is sin, could have sub-

• subjected him to them. Sin alone could let into the world wars, distempers and death. And God could not punish the pride of man with greater justice, than to make him so like beasts in sensible things, as they seem even to obscure the immortality of his nature.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The difference between Man and Beast.

THe chief difference between Man and Beast, is reason ; which comprehends memory of things that are past , and foresight of those that are to come.

Hence arises speech, which is not only proper to man, but a general means to communicate thoughts , covering them with such sounds that men applied their notions to. Speech is divided into all sorts of Languages, nor is there any Nation

on but makes use of it to keep up civil society.

Hence arise also Sciences, Arts, Commerce, Societies and Kingdoms.

The second is liberty, an indifference of doing and not doing what he pleases: Whereas beasts are determined in all their actions by a predominant instinct, they cannot resist.

Hence arise Laws to secure private men, and promote publick interest; which are grounded only upon liberty, there being no room for them in a nature determined to the same thing.

Hence also arise vertues, which result from the good use of liberty and obedience to the Laws.

Nay

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Nay man is discernable by his vices. The love of Glory, and the desire of Commanding distinguishes us from beasts; though our condition be not a jot the better for it; *since all desires not overswayed by reason render us more miserable, and misery is never an argument to raise our selves above any other.*

Now the question is, whether besides so many palpable differences, there is not yet some other invisible that distinguishes man in his duration.

1st. To consider the thing it self, it is already very possible that amongst so many external differences there is some internal unknown to us. There is
great

great probability that souls so contrary in all things are so too in their duration, and in their essence. How could man do things so far beyond the reach and capacity of beasts, were not his nature nobler and perfecter than theirs. This supposition is very probable.

2^{ly}. If we survey attentively all the advantages of man above beasts, they do all imply a natural tendency to immortality.

The nature of the soul is spiritual. This appears from her thoughts, which represent to her spiritual objects, and from general ideas from private images of things. But if the being of the soul be spiritual,

ritual, it is also immortal. Since a being totally independent from matter; is subject to no alteration.

3^{ly}. If we examine reason, which is the character of the soul, it is bound within no compass of time. By the help of memory and foresight nothing is future or past to man. Memory recalls precedent ages: foresight sets before our eyes events that are to come. Reason enacts laws to order matters of men, if 'twere possible, for ever. Books shall teach posterity as long as men live. Dying people intend by their last will to dispose to all future ages of the goods that are in their power. There is
no

no man but desires eternal life and happiness. None but fears infamy after his death. Nay, those very men wish for immortality who desire their souls to be immortal.

Are not these prejudices strong enough to move any man? We have a clear notion of immortality. Our mind foresees, our heart wishes for, every body aspires to it. It is therefore at least to be concluded in the number of possible things. And the contrary opinion cannot be received, unless it brings along with it an evidence equal to that, of having seen a soul annihilated, which never happened and never shall.

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Our eyes, saies the Irreligious, are not witnesses of the souls immortality. It is true. But are they of her destruction? Is not either of them equally unattainable to our senses? What can then determine him rather to the belief of one, than of the other, since both are equally unknown to him?

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Some places of Ecclesiastes Irreligious men make use of to prove the mortality of the soul, explained.

Nothing surprises more than to see the Irreligious make use of a Book written against Irreligion. The *Ecclesiastes* supposes every where existence of God, and the creation of man. He condemns the vanity of his desires: reproaches him with ignorance in the works of God: draws a picture of the chief abuses of all conditions: threatens all sinners with the last judgement, and exhorts them to repent be-

fore death may overtake them.

It is easie to see that all this is grounded upon immortality. If the soul does not out-live the body, it is needless to perswade to actions of piety, which should go unrewarded; and to deter us from crimes by the image of a judgement to come, which had nothing real in it. Certainly the design of *Solomon* being to lead us to God through the duties of a sincere piety, this Book is directly opposite to the error of the destruction of the soul, the belief of her mortality being the foundation of all Religion.

But had he established it in any place, with what probability could we make use of another

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ther to destroy it? Unless we should impute to the Wise man a shameful contradiction, and accuse him to pull down before-hand what he intended to build after.

The scope of the last Chapter is to advise men to serve God from their Youth, and not put off their conversion to the last years of their life, wherein repentance is so suspicious. And having metaphorically described the dissolution of the body in these words: *Ere the wheel be broken at the Cistern*; he breaks off his metaphors, and saies plainly, *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* 12. 6.

These words make out clearly the immortality of the soul, If our spirit subsists not after the dissolution of the body, how can it return to God? Can a spirit which is annihilated return to his maker? And this seems to be enforced by the comparison he makes of it to the dust. For the dust our body is made of, subsists really after the dissolution of the whole.

Nay, this dust is immortal, no creature being able to annihilate it; and matter remaining incorruptible to any natural power. Therefore the dust of our body subsisting even after our death, *returning to the earth as it was*, who doubts but
our

our spirit returning to God who gave it, subsists after the separation. There is not the least colour to attribute any other sense to the Wise man. And we are naturally led to it by the justness of the comparison between these two parts of our selves. *The spirit shall return unto God who gave it, as the dust shall return to the earth as it was.* 'Tis the Wise-mans proposition. But the dust subsists even after the separation, and returns really to the earth. Therefore the spirit returning to God who gave it, subsists really also.

Nor is it an amazing thing that our soul should be immortal, since the dust and earth she animates is so too. And as
death

death is not the annihilation of bodies, but their separation from souls, and their dissolution into elements; so it is not the annihilation of the soul, but its separation from the body, and reunion to God as her source,

Indeed after so precise an assertion of the immortality of the soul, any ingenious adversary will confess, that if some obscure place occurs, it is a rule of common sense to reduce it to the perspicuity of these words.

But what must one say if that very place the Irreligious usurps against immortality should suppose it so plainly that it is meer nonsense out of that supposition?
The

The Wise-man saies, that having considered those places where Judges sit, he had seen wickedness in them, and impiety in their judgements, *vers.* 16, 17. But that their verdicts shall be reviewed and reformed, *When God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every purpose, and for every work, that it cannot be understood but of the last judgement, and consequently supposes before-hand the immortality of the soul.*

He adds, *vers.* 18, 19. that he has said in his heart concerning the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see, that they themselves are beasts.

'Tis upon that account in the
Wise-

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Wise-mans opinion, that as one dies, so dies the other. Yea they have all one breath, so that a man has no preeminence upon a beast, for all is but *Vanity*. And that they may be convinced of it, all go to one place, all are of the dust, and turn to dust again. This is so strong a prejudice for stupid and carnal men, as it inclines them to believe that their condition is perfectly the same with that of beasts. *Who knoweth the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?* 'Tis almost the same manner of speaking as that which expresses so perspicuously the immortality of the soul, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Which is the same

Same as if he had said ; in that deep ignorance of all things men are involved, there is not so much as one who knowes that which no body should be a stranger to, being the foundation of all Religion, that rational souls are immortal, and that of the beasts is not.

It appears therefore clearer than light it self, that the Wiseman proposes not this truth as doubtful, but as undoubtedly granted. Which is an extraordinary manner of speaking. When to exaggerate some points, men are engaged to know, one doubts whether they do know others which are more common? Is there an ignorance, may one say, equal to that

that of the Popish people in many places? They think it lawful to keep another mans goods, as long as the Law does not call them to an account; they blame no Oaths but perjury. Nay, who of them knowes whether there is three persons in God, and two Natures in Christ?

'Tis just the same trope the Wise-man spoke in. He is not uncertain whether the soul returns to God whence she came, since he professes it expressly at the end of his Book; but he doubts whether amongst the men of his time, any had light enough to discover this truth in the midst of so much darkness.

If

➤ If speaking thus he seems to doubt of the souls immortality; he must have doubted also of the corruptibility of the souls of beasts, his expression reaching equally to both. *Who knoweth the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit of beasts that go downward?*

He must then mean this. Who knowes whether the spirit of man subsists after death, as it is usually believed, and that of beasts perishes with the body? But is it a thing wise Solomon could doubt of? Are men naturally inclined to believe souls of beasts immortal? Could he ballance a moment to which he was to ascribe immortality, mans or beast?

CHAP. IX.

A short Analysis of the Book of Ecclesiastes.

THere is no conduct more liable to illusions, than to pick up some places favourable to ones opinion, without reflecting upon many others directly opposite to it. Thus the Irreligious makes use of some places in the *Ecclesiastes* which seem agreeable to his fancies, and leaves an hundred other which say the quite contrary.

This artifice is easily overthrown by this answer, either admit or deny them all, since all have the same authority.

He

He alledges *Solomon* exhorts us to live pleasantly : that he declares he saw nothing more advantageous under the Sun : and that it was the happiness God had granted him, as if no other was to be expected. He understands all those places of riot and sensual pleasures, thus attributing to the wisest of Kings to excite his Readers to debauchery, and all that can irritate the sinfullest passions.

Certainly one must needs have a strangely low idea of things, to conceive no other joy but that which is carnal, and imagine *Solomon* exhorts us to fall into excess, he confesses himself to have been guilty of. But one must needs be very blind,

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who

who does not see, that he relates them only to condemn them, and lay open their folly and emptiness. To discern then what the Wise-man allowes, from the liberties the Irreligious claims, as if they were consequences of his doctrine, it seem'd worth the while to end this discourse by a short analysis of *Ecclesiastes*. The sense of every particular place being to be understood by the design and spirit of the whole Book, which chances to be the same, as of this Discourse.

The general aim *Solomon* proposes to himself, is to withdraw mans heart from the love of the world, the enjoyment of creatures and his eagerness for riches and .

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and transitory things, to the end that he may love, fear and serve God alone. 'Tis the conclusion he draws from the arguments he has spread through the whole book. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every word into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.* c. 12. 13, 14.

The only ground he insists upon to perswade them, is that the world and all its attendance is vanity, abuse, darkness and misery for them that seek to be happy by it. Thus he begins his discourse, exclaiming, *vanity of vanities, all*

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is vanity. Then he gives an exact account of all these vanities. He describes exaggerates, and carries them so far as to render every one sensible of his own misery. He prescribes particular remedies for each of them. And because his book is directed to great sinners, he seems to compound with them; and to hinder them from fixing their love in the creatures; he allows them a moderate and lawful use of them.

All these vanities may be reduced to twenty three: some are drawn from the imperfection of creatures in themselves; others from the ill use men make of them.

The

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The first is that all things under the Sun are transitory and subject to alteration; that all is obscure and hard to be apprehended; that there is nothing new, and the most glorious things are buried in oblivion as soon as they are gone. c. 1. v. 2, 11. That there are arguments to mortifie our inclination to present things, our curiosity for new discoveries, and above the thirst of Glory and Fame so natural to all men.

Vanity in learning, which requires so constant, and so hard a labour. 16, 18.

Vanity in the pleasures of this life, magnificence of buildings, and great number and variety of attendants. c. 2. v.

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Vanity in the sublimest knowledge since it procures no advantage to the learned above the ignorant, both dying and being equally forgotten after their death. 12. 17.

Vanity in the hardships men undergo night and day, to heap up riches, not knowing whom they gather them for. That it is better to enjoy the fruit of his labours, than heap up still, and starve ones self to enrich an unworthy heir. That this baseness of soul is one of the greatest punishments of God, 16, 18, 26.

Vanity in the changes and and cares of men, who are obliged to vary them at every moment. That how great and
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satisfying soever be the works of God, yet mans heart wishing still for an eternal and immutable God, can find no rest in them. So that the best way is to use them moderately, still expecting greater things. c. 3.

v. 1, 15.

Vanity in the unjust sentences of judges, which the great Judge will disannul. 16, 17.

Vanity in that notorious equality between man and beast, in life, death and corruption, so as to incline stupid man to doubt of their own souls immortality. 18, 22.

Vanity in calumnies innocent people suffer, and the envy to which they are exposed who excel in any faculty. c. 9.

v. 1, 16.

Va-

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Vanity in a mans continuall
toils who heapeth still, though
he has no heire, and intends to
have none. 7, 12.

Vanity in the revolution of
states, wherein from the low-
est rank one is often raised to
the throne. 13, 16.

Vanity in the quick decay of
the greatest fortunes after so
many pains to be settled in them.
12, 19.

Vanity in the greatest riches,
the owner whereof is snatcht
away before he can enjoy them:
that to judge that man by his
own principles having put his
happines in them, he must be
accounted most unhappy. That
a Child dying as soon as he is
born it is not so much to be pi-
tied. c. 6. 18.

Vani-

Vanity in the pompous funerals of the impious, and those false commendations spent upon them in funeral Sermons.

Vanity in the multitude of objects which are so uncertain, as men know not very often which is most useful to them.

c. 7. 1, 18.

Vanity in the long life of the impious, and precipitate end of the just. 16, 21.

Vanity in women whose manners (in Solomon's time) were so corrupted that he could find none good. 28, 30.

Vanity in the prosperity of the impious, and persecutions of the just. Whence the Wiseman takes occasion to commend

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commend them who enjoy uprightly the plenty God has given them. 14, 15.

Vanity in the laborious search into the secrets of nature. 16, 17.

Vanity in the deep ignorance we are of our state towards God; and of the great confidence of the impious, because good and evil falls equally upon the just and unjust. c. 9. 1, 22.

Vanity in that fortune and hazard have a greater share in riches than merit.

Vanity in that the best counsels either are not hearkned to, or pass unrewarded. 13, 18.

Vanity in the unequal distribution of charges and honours by

by the cheats put upon Princes.

C. 10, 1, 2, 3.

The Wise-man having ended the tenth Chapter with some moral maxims, takes up all the eleventh to commend distribution of alms both to the covetous and prodigal. Till at last he concludes his Book by exhorting men to return to God, before old age should overtake them, as if he said to them. If so many abuses and vanities cannot unloose you from the world; let at last the consideration of old age, which being so near, will not permit you to enjoy it a long while, perswade you to renounce those goods willingly, which you must infallibly forsake. This is the
con-

conclusion of all his arguments; the consequence he draws from the conduct of the world he represented all a long in his Book; and the end of all is, that there is no solid happiness here, but that it must be found in God.

Hence it appears that Solomon enumerates those many vanities only to breed in us a distaste of the world. He reckons amongst them all the pleasures of his life, the magnificence of his buildings; the sumptuousness of entertainments, the greatness of his treasures, the multitude of his attendants, and generally all the diversions of a numerous and flourishing Court. He declares plainly,
that

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that having considered the works of his hands, all was but vanity, misery, vexation of mind, and that there is under the Sun no solid and permanent happiness.

And thus when he saies at the end of the second Chapter, and in some other places, *there is nothing better for man than that he should eat and drink*, it must be sure understood of the moderate enjoyment of the world, otherwise Solomon should not be lookt upon as the wisest, but maddest of men.

But let it be far from us to think so unworthily of him whom God had endowed with divine wisdom, to permit an harmless innocent joy, and a moderate use of riches equally

ly distant from covetousness and prodigality, is not to open a gap to all sorts of excesses.

Men have been differently towards riches. There has been Saints who to give themselves wholly to the contemplation of heavenly things, did entirely shake them off. Upright men dispence them soberly. Sinners pervert them into an ill use, either squandering them shamefully, or keeping them out of a base covetousness. 'Tis to them *Solomon* directs his discourse. It was easier to him to keep famous debauches within the bounds of lawful pleasures, than to perswade them they ought wholly to forsake them,
and

and pass from one extreame to the other. And to cure that baseness of souls which scarce allows some people a sober use of what they possess, his best way was to incite the covetous to their moderate enjoyment.

'Tis true, he makes use also of some other consideration to the same purpose. Sometimes he takes occasion from the restless curiosity wherewith some men search into the secrets of nature, to tell them that a quiet and commodious life is preferable to that vanity. Sometimes he proposes the necessity of dying incident to every body, and of such influence upon some, as it obscures in their mind

mind the immortality of their soul. Nothing being more powerful to stop the designs of an ambitious man, than to let him understand he must die, and has no advantage over the most despicable beasts.

The smallest reflection upon those places, will perswade any rational man Solomon cannot invite us to a sinful joy, he condemns every where, but rather to an innocent cheerfulness inseparable from a good conscience. Or if in the sixth Chapter he thinks him unhappy, who being left heir to a great estate cannot enjoy it, he speaks still supposing that mans inward disposition, who having
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- set all his happiness in the goods of this life, is by his death spoiled of them, and expects no others in the next.

L THE

THE
Third Discourse.

*Application of the two
precedent Discourses
to the Irreligious.*

CHAP. I.

*That the advantage being so great of
the side of Christian Religion.
The Irreligious ought to rid him-
self of all sorts of prejudices, and
the more, because the disorders of
his life is the only source of his
Irreligion.*

IT is rationally expected
that no Irreligious man will
hereafter think Christiani-
ty false, because all the articles
of

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• of our faith are not to be demonstrated as problems of Geometry: they will confess it has at least some degrees of probability. Which being supposed, this proposition must take with any man of sense, that it being probable Christian Religion may be true, and if so, attended with eternal happiness, or misery; it concerns him to have it true by all means, and give over all prejudices against it.

The Irreligious must then examine whether his love to Irreligion is the effect of the persuasion of his mind, or of the corruption of his heart; Whether the falshood, or the severity of his maxims staggers him. Falshood indeed is offensive to the

L 2 mind;

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mind, but severity only to the heart and flesh; and no man, let him be never so little concerned for himself, will reject Religion upon that account. 'Twould be the greatest paralogism in the world. *Thus Religion is severe, it forbids sensual pleasures, therefore it is false.* There may be pleasures so sinful as a Religion may be true, and yet forbid them.

This search into his own heart is the more necessary, because pleasures, and passions, which may be called the reasons of the heart, are the firmest grounds of Irreligion. It is worth our observation, and is no small argument of its being false, that none ever fell into it who sought

• fought for the truth with sincerity. Study and sobriety never led any man to it. It is not met withall in ones way. There must be wandrings to find it out ; nor can it be so till after a laborious task to corrupt and deprave his understanding.

Nature cries, there is a God, and the world is the work of his hands. There is no people so barbarous but has heard that voice. As soon as we had the use of our reason, the Church took care to teach us; that our nature is depraved by sin ; that we are born children of wrath ; banish our heavenly country ; that we stand in need of a Saviour who cures our

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wounds, reconciles us to God, and opens to us the Kingdom of Heaven; that Christ is that blessed redeemer; and that there is no salvation out of his Church.

The Irreligious received those instructions from his infancy. How came he to forget them so soon? By that sad mischance did he engage in an opinion contrary to what he had learned at School, and condemned by all the examples he saw both publick and domestick.

It is no hard matter to find out the cause of it. Disorder and Libertinism brought him to it. The crimes of his youth have been as so many degrees that

• that led him to the bottom of the abyss. Ill companies added to the corruption of his heart infected and debauched him. The habit of riot and excess got such holds on him, as it became a kind of necessity. Yet he had preserved light enough to see that his life, and the hopes of another could never agree; and that if what Christianity teaches of the severe justice of God, of the immortality of our souls, and of the last judgement, was true, he was the most miserable of men, amidst his false delights.

There was therefore a choice to be made between a life so disordered and a Religion so

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pure, both being irreconcilable. But how could he break off the fetters of lust armed and backed with a possession of many years? The only thoughts of it made the whole heart rebel against the mind. Perhaps he did strive to free himself from that oppression, but fell lower than he was before.

He thought it therefore easier to extinguish what faith and Religion was left him. He turned Almighty God out of the world. Or if he left him his being, 'twas upon condition that he should have nothing to do with him in this life or in the next. He disannulled the act of the last Judgement,
extin-

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extinguished the flames of Hell, called them tales and stories to fright Children, and to hinder misery from ever falling upon him, annihilated himself after his death. He put a vail on his eyes only to peep on things. Then he said confidently he saw nothing clearly, and there was no more ground to believe, than to disbelieve, or believe the contrary. In a word, he had rather run to those excesses than refrain his passions.

Yet if Irreligious men will give glory to truth, they must acknowledge that this was the way which led them to the pit. And what other arguments can they expect to be condemned by? Is that licentious life of theirs

theirs an argument against God and his Religion? Is the Gospel less true because they are become slaves of their passions? Certainly they might degenerate into the very state of beasts, truth would not be less unchangeable. Before they had engaged so deeply in sin, when they lived an honest, Christian life, there was a God, maker of Heaven and Earth, a Jesus Christ who had redeemed us with his blood, their soul was immortal, and had they persevered in those commendable beginnings, Faith and Religion would never have decayed.

But since they live disorderly all the world is altered. There is no God, no Christ, no

An-

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• Angels, no Devils, no souls. There is no Heaven to hope, no Hell to fear. All that has been annihilated in a moment, or become so obscure, as not to be apprehended. But oh wonder! they begun to open their eyes only since they gave themselves to the love of Creatures, whose natural effect is to blind. Now, are they not sensible of the insufferable absurdity of these pretences? And if they will answer sincerely: what other proofs they need to be convinced that they are out of the way.

But as their sinful inclinations darkned their understanding, they must never hope to see clear in the things of God
till

till they are free from their slavery. Our heart being prepossessed with a violent passion for any object, is not calm and unconcerned enough to judge whether the Law which condemns its excesses is just. He declares before hand against a Religion which bars him from his most tender desires as an enemy to his quiet. And the mind covered with the mist passion casts over it, cannot weigh impartially the most solid reasons.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Three Obstacles the Irreligious must remove by three contrary dispositions.

IF then the Irreligious seeks the truth with sincerity, which the doctrine of Christ alone can lead us to, let him remove all the obstacles that hinder him from being persuaded. They may be reduced to three; two of which are in him, and the last in God himself.

The first is his sensual pleasures and passions, the ordinary causes of his sins. The least passion naturally obstructs the mind, and
un-

unfits it to pierce the cloud that lies over the truth. But sensual pleasures are directly opposite to the Gospel of Christ; and 'twere a miracle if a soul charmed and possessed with them could understand Religion.

And so a sober, innocent life free from passions and sins is the first disposition required of an Irreligious man. He must begin before-hand to live in a manner answerable to the dignity of the law he examines. The King of Heaven as jealous of his authority as the Kings of the Earth, exacts from those rebels that they should put down their arms before he enters into any conditions of peace. This obedience of theirs will be a preparation

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paration to faith, as faith is a necessary condition to apprehend our mysteries. The Irreligious would apprehend before he should believe and obey : but he must do both before he can apprehend, *Nisi credideris non intelligetis*. We cannot know it better than from the author of our faith. The practice of his doctrine is the only way to know whether it comes from Heaven? He will make an happy experiment of the truth of the words of the Prophet. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is pure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of*
the

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*the Lord is pure, enlightning the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring
for ever. The judgements of the
Lord are true and righteous altoge-
ther.*

Thus the Irreligious must begin to examine the true Religion; otherwise he flatters himself in vain to have done his indeavours in that search. As long as his heart is stained by the love of creatures, he has not gone the first step. But seeking Religion without forsaking his vices, he united things that are irreconcilable.

The second obstacle the Irreligious meets in his waies, is a disturbed busie life, which tying him to present things,
leaves

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leaves him no time to think upon his true concerns. He is never at home. External objects carry him from himself. And care, study and application being the only means that can help him in his search, without them his undertaking will prove unsuccessful. God is not to be found but in true Religion. The Church he has founded *is his dwelling place.* There is from it but illusions and deceit. True Religion is very often covered with obscurities, which incline proud men to think it false. God has hid himself as it were with a cloud, that men might seek for him. He needs therefore all the application, care and industry he

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is

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is capable of to see through it. If he succeeds or mistakes, he is happy or miserable for ever.

The last obstacle the Irreligious must overcome is the justice of God he has provok'd, who to be revenged of him, *Spargit pœnales cecitates super illicitas cupiditates.* The wrath of God is manifested in him by his indifference for any Religion, his invincible hatred to any thing that can disturb the happy peace he enjoys, and the disposition he is in to live a pleasant, easie, delicious life.

From that deplorable state of his flowes naturally a third condition necessary to an Irreligious man who begins to open his eyes, and that is, a violent grief.

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grief. If it be true that there is a God, such as Christians adore, can there be a creature more an enemy to him, and consequently more miserable? Can a greater injury be done to almighty God, than to exclude him from the number of Beings; contemn his Laws; laugh at his threatnings; reckon him a fancy which subsists only in a crackt brain; and live in a total independence from him.

He cannot therefore be too much afflicted when he seeks for God; the loss he makes of him being inseparable from his own.

These are the obstacles may deter him from Christian Religion. Let his experience ju-

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stifie the sanctitie and security of those means. Let them try the truth of its maxims before they reject it, there being so nearly concerned that their eternal happiness lies at the stake. And *what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul? and what shall he give in exchange for his soul, if ever he chance to lose it?*

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The Irreligious cannot be neuter in matters of Religion.

THe other part of the comparison being that Irreligion leads to eternal torments, is yet of nearer concern to Irreligious men. They may be apt to say that they renounce all other, if they can be secure of their present happiness. That they have made choice of earth for their eternal mansion ; and that this eternity of joyes so much talkt of could not make amends for their loss. This ridiculous and foolish answer is

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made by some with great earnestness. Present things have charms so strong for them, that they cannot be torn from them. Their heart can love, and their mind see nothing else.

Indeed their conduct would not be so strange and unpardonable, if there were but eternal happiness to be won or lost. They might renounce it nor think themselves more miserable for it. But everlasting torments being into the bargain, that is the most lamentable condition can be imagined; is not only useful, but of an indispensable obligation to them to change their belief. There is no doubting and considering one single moment.

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ment. 'Tis fury, and Frensie rather to be exposed to eternal torments than to embrace a party where there is no risque at all.

'Tis true, Irreligion only prefers annihilation to being and life : a nothing free from sentiment and misery to a life infinitely happy. And to give the best colour to their choice, they imagine that if they lose it they are free from the smart of their loss ; since he can suffer nothing who is annihilated. But they will not see that in the uncertainty the question was all along supposed to be , their pretended annihilation has its dangers and horrors too. If they chance not to be anni-

hilated, as it may, or may not be, they lose not only a blessed immortality, but fall into an everlasting misery. But if having performed all the duties of the Gospel they are cheated of their hopes, they can be annihilated, which was their first choice. This seems clear beyond all expression.

Well, saies the Irreligious, I reject both immortality, and annihilation. I intend to be neither Christian nor Irreligious. I will keep a perfect neutrality. That cannot be. Of two opposite parties, you must fix upon one. To suspend is to declare your choice. Not to embrace the Doctrine of Christ, is to oppose him.
Since

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- Since 'tis no matter which way we go to work, whether by a direct and formal opposition of a contrary Sect, or by a negative unbelief ; either of them spoiling him of his honour.

Since then there is no medium between these two extremes, you must declare ; But of which side ? For that which is the surest. You can do no less, if you have not lost all sense and care of your self. In either of them there is something to hope , or fear. The hope of Irreligion is annihilation ; its fears eternal torments. The hopes of Religion are eternal happiness, its fears, annihilation. So as it was proved

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ved before the greatest peril of Christianity if it proves false, is the greatest advantage of impiety if it proves true.

Supposing then, as we have already done, both parties full of equal uncertainty, you ought still to embrace Religion, moved thereunto, if not by the certainty of the object, at least by the necessity you are in determining between two objects, the one infinitely dreadful, the other infinitely advantageous. You must chuse a Religion. You must avoid that which is attended by an unspeakable misery. These two necessities are equal to any certainty.

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I am obliged, saies the Irreligious, to be a Christian to the double necessity I am put to of choosing between Religion and Irreligion, and to avoid that of the two, wherein I may be lost for ever. But I am nothing the better for it. My will may submit, but my understanding is not convinced. I desire, but cannot believe. 'Tis useful, 'tis necessary to believe, but that is nothing to me; since no man could pass from doubt to perswasion upon such ground as this; *That whatsoever is good and useful to believe is undoubtedly true.*

Certainly what greater prejudice can there be for the truth
of

of doctrine which frees us from eternal torments, than the necessity of believing it. That delivery of ours being a necessary, real, effective good, all that can contribute efficaciously to it, must have the same qualifications. And there is no Chimera, the belief whereof be necessary, or good, to avoid eternal misery.

It is therefore generally true, that whatever is good, or necessary to believe, is true and certain; since if it were not so, there would be no use or necessity of believing it. If telling lies be sometimes of any use, sure believing of them is of none at all. Much less is there an obligation of being persuaded

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ded of them. And we may
apply to falshood what *Tertulli-*
an saies of Sin : That they
whose concern it is not to be
mistaken in matters of Religi-
on, are far from making it ne-
cessary to be mistaken. *Nulla*
est necessitas peccandi iis quibus una
est necessitas non peccandi. But
the Irreligious acknowledge it
good and necessary to believe
Christian Religion, that he may
avoid eternal damnation; there-
fore he must conclude it true,
and embrace it.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The least degree of probability Religion has above Irreligion, is enough to bring the Irreligious to a very probable opinion, and from opinion to faith.

Supposing Religion true and certain in it self, it is not so to me, saies the Irreligious, who seeing nothing in it but uncertain, or at most probable. Faith implies an assent to what you believe as to a certain, and not a probable thing. How therefore can I believe any Religion as undoubted which is still uncertain to me.

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This indeed cannot be as long as you have no greater light. But till it increases and flames to a higher degree, do now what lies in your power. You confess Christianity is a little more probable than Irreligion. That can hinder you then to embrace the most probable party, and specially when it secures your eternity, reputation, and all other advantages. Must you be divided and racked by different passions, and complain at the same time of the necessity and impossibility of believing? And why will you deny your self in this occasion, that which you do in all others, that is, to follow the most probable opinion? Irreligion

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ligion was no less uncertain to you at that very time you lookt upon it, as more probable than Christianity. Yet its uncertainty did not fright you from running into it. The liberty and independency it promised made you resign up all your doubts. Why then, the one giving you so great hopes do you refuse to do for it what you do for the other.

Perhaps you deny it to be more probable. Well, let it be so. The most you can do for Irreligion is to doubt. Maintain as long as you please the eternity of the World, and the mortality of the soul. Put your sentiments in their most favourable light, you can never de-

demonstrate and free them from doubts. After all your endeavours they will be still opinions, and nothing but opinions. But if you doubt of them in the least, you ought to forsake them. It being an horrid madness to venture your salvation upon an uncertain opinion. *Ipsa facto*, that it is an opinion it may be false; and if it be so, you ruine your self for ever. In a concern as important as eternity is, you must rely upon dogms which cannot mislead you.

But till you conceive how far Christianity is from misleading you, submit to it. That stedfast disposition of mind to believe comes from the will;

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and

and if this be determined, the other will quickly be perswaded. Faith must not depend upon the relation of senses, or the evidence of reason, but its own determination. You are not concerned to know, but to believe. Science may challenge demonstrations, but the glory of faith is to submit to Gods authority. Though its seat be in the mind, yet it depends almost totally from the will: which induced *St. Austin* to say, that it depends from humane liberty to believe or not believe.

If some want penetration and light, none wants a good will. Nothing else is required to believe. Almighty God so
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tempered our faith, as to proportion it to all sorts of trains, because being absolutely necessary to salvation, and the penetration of men so different; had it depended from their parts the unlearned would have been excluded from it. But now the Ignorant are even with the greatest Doctors. Thus it is easie to pass from uncertainty to certainty, forcing our understanding to believe. Notwithstanding all its reluctances; and reducing uncertainty to inevidence which is the character of Faith.

CHAP. V.

The Irreligious of education, if there is any, may be convinced of the truth of Christianity, by Scripture, and miracles. The Irreligious of profession must supply his want of evidence by a sincere hearty will.

I Do not know what can be opposed to those principles except one should say that faith depends not immediately from the will, because the will does not believe by it self, but only determines the understanding to believe. But that determination still presupposes a conviction; the empire of the will

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• will being not so great as to sway the understanding, without at least a seeming reason to satisfy it.

This Objection might be of some weight, proposed by an Irreligious man of education altogether unacquainted with Christianity. Then I would prove the existence of God by the testimonies he gave of himself in the Scripture, and the Scripture by those infinite wonders he wrought by *Moses*, Christ and his Apostles.

The Apostles converted the world with arguments of this nature. Nations astonished at the sight of dead men rising from their graves, could not doubt whether the power

which exceeded so much that of nature, did really exist. Miracles made it visible to their eyes; and this was the object to which their will applied their understanding, to the end it might be subject to the obedience of faith.

Nor has that sort of Irreligious men less ground to believe them, than all the Nations converted by the Apostles. They must look upon those miracles as if they had been wrought before their own eyes. They have in them the same power of conviction as they had before, and prove no less against them than they did against the Heathens. The differences of time take nothing from proofs which

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• which consists in matters of fact. Miracles may pass, but the truth of a fact is unchangeable. It out-lasts them; and as long as it is true that Christ and his Servants wrought miracles to prove his divinity, they must seem to any rational man invincible arguments.

Supposing then that any man born Irreligious, should desire light to fire his understanding upon, that he might believe; he should seek no where for it but in the authority of God who has spoken in the Scriptures, and authorised the Scriptures by miracles. When God speaks to us, his words are infallible, his au-

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thority sovereign ; our submission bears no limitations : and the dispute being reduced to matter of fact, any ingenuous souls would be easily satisfied. But there is no such Irreligious of education, all men being brought up in some Religion or other. The Irreligious of our times are so of profession, decayed Christians, concealed Apostates, who having been brought up in the principles of Christianity, were carried to Irreligion either by corrupted companies , bad books, and above all, a prodigious inclination to riot and excesses. They want no light to believe the symbol of the
Apo-

• Apostles. They need but remember what they had been taught before their depravation, and refresh those Ideas sin has so entirely defaced in them.

They pretend they cannot believe, because they do not see things with their own eyes.

But there is a vast difference between not believing a thing, because we have proofs of its falshood, and not believing it because we want sufficient arguments of its truth. The understanding may be more easily subdued in the second sense than in the first; and the will swaied by the authority of the speaker

speaker may supply the want of Reason.

This insufficiency or rather inevidence of proofs is the only foundation of their incredulity. But alas, how groundless and irrational? How wonderful is the confidence of men who complain of the insufficiency of proofs to believe Christianity, whereas they have the same insufficiency in the principles of Irreligion. How many times did passion or the authority of their Teachers supply their want of reason? Did they not produce so many acts of faith as there are incomprehensible consequences in the worlds eternity? Why do they refuse

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refuse to do the same now, and rely upon an authority considerable by an infinite number of miracles.

They grant no more in that, but what is required of them either in sciences, or in the commerce of humane life. They are concerning the secrets of God as an apprentice totally unacquainted with the principles, and terms of the art he learns. But there is no principle apprentice, as the Philosopher and experience teach us, but must believe what he cannot apprehend. The blind belief he gives to his Masters directions, is the foundation of all the perfection he can come

come to in his Art. The first elements of every Science cannot be proved ; and supposing they could, an apprentice is not able to understand them. His best is to receive them with an entire acquiescence of mind.

Why then do not the Irreligious in matters so dark as Religion is, imitate Apprentices in the first rudiments which are given them , or remember what they did themselves when they first learned any thing? Are they more knowing in the deep mysteries of Christianity, than they were in Geometry and Musick. They assented blindfold to him who taught them to play upon the Lute;
and

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and they will not be ashamed to exact from God demonstrations for every Article of his Doctrine. Certainly Irreligion carries men to strange extremities. Is it possible they should not see, that their reason must the more submit to Gods Authority, because those mysteries he reveals unto us are infinitely more disproportion'd to our senses, than all Arts and Sciences in the world.

THE END.

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